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Chapter
4

THE POSITION OF THE CHAMBERLAIN ATTENDANTS SHOULD BE ABOLISHED.
THOSE PEOPLE SHOULDN'T BE SO CLOSE TO HER MAJESTY.
hah..
hah.
YOUNG MASTER! BE STRONG
TO PREVENT PNEUMONIA,
HE MUST REST.

SO, HE'S CALLED MISONO.
HE SEEMS A BIT TOO OLD TO BE CALLED A BOY.
THE ATTENDANT BOYS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE AS INTERMEDIARIES BETWEEN THE INNER AND OUTER PALACES.
EVEN IF YOU COMMAND IT...
flustered
DID YOU HEAR ME, GRAND CHAMBER LAIN?
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, ROKUOUIN-NO-MIYA-SAMA,
THE ATTEND-ANT WHO ANNOUNCED ME HIS NAME WAS-
sigh
IT'S MISONO, SIR.
SMILE
IS IT SUCH AN IMPOSSIBLE THING TO REQUEST?
I'LL ALLOW IT THEN, GRAND CHAMBER-LAIN
phew

YOUNG MASTER,
YOUR FRIENDS HAVE COME TO VISIT YOU
MISONO, ARE YOU STILL ALIVE?
TOTSUJI-SAN, KUGA-SAN...
OTOMI, THESE TWO ARE MY SEMPAI AS ATTENDANTS
WELL, TAKE A SEAT

I've been entrusted with the guidance of my juniors
MISONO,
AH
OR TO THE PALACE!
bite
YES, I HAVE TO BUILD UP MY STRENGTH OR I WON'T BE ABLE TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL.
EVER SINCE YOU TWO RESIGNED, I'VE BEEN THE OLDEST ATTENDANT.
TO THE PALACE?
IT'S BAD TO GET PNEUMONIA FROM A COLD AND BE SICK FOR TWO MONTHS.
DIDN'T YOU RESIGN AS AN ATTENDANT?
C
falls

BROTHER!!!...
WHAT HAPPENED ?
I couldn't speak when I was ill.
WHY-?
CONGRAT-ULATIONS, KIMIYORI!
OH, KIMIYORI IT'S GREAT TO SEE YOU LOOKING SO WELL
THE ENTIRE DEBT OF THE MISONO FAMILY HAS BEEN CLEARED!!
SPAR_KLE
THE MASTER DECLARED BANKRUPCY
Amazing
Wow
clap clap
!?

THE INDUSTRIALIST TORADA FAMILY HAS TAKEN CARE OF EVERYTHING.
THE FARM THE MASTER INVESTED IN WAS A FRAUD IN THAT SITUATION, HE WAS ONLY ABLE TO AVOID SELLING THE ESTATE.
MOO~
KIMI-CHAN, LOOK! IT'S THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WEDDING DRESS
SHE AGREED WHEN HE OFFERED TO BUY HER THE KIMONO OF HER CHOICE...
I got it too ~
WASN'T TORADA THE SAME NOUVEAU RICHE MAN WHO OFFERED TO MARRY SHIZUKO?
SHE WOULD NEVER... SHE HATED HIM.
Hmm
I THOUGHT SO TOO.
.....
Are they really his brother and sister?
Yes, it's strange
That they would be related to him

SO, KIMIYORI, IT'S NO LONGER NECESSARY FOR YOU TO GO TO THE PALACE.
You can rest easy now
Pat
WHILE YOU WERE SICK, A MESSENGER CAME FROM THE PALACE AND ASKED ABOUT YOU.
"HE'S RESIGNING," I REPLIED
Huh
hahaha We're much obliged to you~
MY SIX-TEENTH AUTUMN
WAS THE FIRST TIME I WANTED TO HIT MY BROTHER

Sign: Head Chamberlain's Office
侍従長詰所
MY BROTHER'S WORDS ARE NOT MY WORDS.
I'M PERFECTLY HEALTHY NOW.
PLEASE LET ME CONTINUE MY JOB!!
.....
HOW OLD ARE YOU NOW?
step...
?
I WILL BE SEVENTEEN NEXT YEAR, ON JANUARY 4TH.
THE CHAMBERLAIN'S ATTENDANTS ARE ALLOWED TO LEAVE AND ENTER THE INNER PALACE WHERE THE PALACE LADIES LIVE. ONLY BOYS ARE SUITABLE FOR THIS JOB
SEVENTEEN IS CLOSE TO THE AGE OF RETIREMENT FOR AN ATTENDANT
THAT'S... RIGHT...
...THERE'S A CERTAIN PERSON YOU SHOULD BE WARY OF
A CERTAIN PERSON?

HOW COULD A YOUNG MAN SERVE BESIDE HER MAJESTY ALONG WITH THE WOMEN?
IT WAS PROBABLY SUGGESTED BY ROKUOUIN-NO-MIYA-SAMA.
WHAT A FOOLISH THING! WITHOUT A WORD OF EXPLANATION
DON'T SAY THAT, YOUR MAJESTY!

MATSUBA-NO-SUKE,
MIYA WANTED REVENGE FOR BEING SHUT OUT OF THE CEDAR DOORS
EVEN SO, HE WOULDN'T DO THAT!
THEN WHY IS MISONO GONE!?
.....
I'VE BEEN WON-DERING,
WHY ARE YOU TRYING TO PROTECT MISONO?
YOUR MAJESTY,
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MISONO?
.....

I LOVE HIM.
I LOVE MISONO.
HE WORKS DILIGENTLY,
AND HE HAD THE COURAGE TO KEEP MIYA OUT OF THE CEDAR DOORS
HE HAS SYMPATHY FOR MY PROBLEMS WHENEVER HE SEES ME
THAT IS WHAT I LOVE ABOUT HIM.
SO, YOU FAVOR HIM.

I FAVOR YOU A LOT, MATSUBA.
hahaha
DON'T FAVOR ANYONE TOO MUCH!
YOUR MAJESTY LIKES EVERYONE YOU FAVOR THEM.
YOU BESTOW YOUR FAVOR ON THOSE CLOSE BESIDE YOU, EVEN KEEPING ME IN MIND
SO, I SHOULD MAKE THE PEOPLE I FAVOR WORK BESIDE ME MY WHOLE LIFE?
YES, THAT KIND OF THING
STEALING AWAY THEIR FREEDOM?
FOR YOUR MAJESTY'S SPIRIT

I DO NOT THINK THOSE THINGS.
I THINK I AM NO MORE THAN A CAGED BIRD.
THEY ARE ALSO LOCKED UP BESIDE ME.

I UNDER-STAND GRAND CHAMBER-LAIN

BUT UNTIL I TURN SEVENTEEN,
COULDN'T I WORK IN SOME OTHER JOB IN THE PALACE!? EVEN A SERVANT'S JOB WOULD BE OKAY
DO YOU UNDERSTAND HOW DIFFICULT THE JOB OF A SERVANT IS?
YES, SIR
AND YOU WON'T BE ALLOWED TO PRY INTO THE MATTERS OF THE INNER PLACE OR BE BESIDE HER MAJESTY
YES, SIR
I WON'T BE ABLE TO PERSUADE YOU
SO, YOU'LL BE ALLOWED TO STAY UNTIL NEXT JANUARY 4TH
DURING THE THREE MONTHS,
I'LL BE ABLE TO ASK HER MAJESTY DIRECTLY
TO ALLOW ME TO RETURN TO MY JOB AS AN ATTENDANT

BECAUSE SHE HAD GIVEN ME THE RING,
I HAD BECOME OVER-CONFIDENT.
GRIP
UMM.
I HAD HEARD ABOUT KASHIWAGI, WHO DID SERVANT'S WORK.
HE WAS AN OLD SERVANT WHO HAD WORKED IN THE PALACE SINCE THE PREVIOUS EMPEROR'S REIGN
HE'S AROUND HERE, PROBABLY HIDING BEHIND THIS FOLDING SCREEN
Waah!
Like a pillbug...
Hiding...
wobble...

It's true!
EH?
SCUTTLE
small & quiet
EHH!?
EXCUSE ME...
.....
VENERABLE KASHIWAGI.
MY NAME IS MISONO PLEASE GIVE ME YOUR GUIDANCE.
FROM TODAY, I'LL BE WORKING AS A SERVANT

JUST CALL ME
KASHIWAGI, YOUNG SIR
Y-YES SIR!
flap
flap
A SERVANT'S JOB DOES NOT INCLUDE FREE TIME TO REST
WE BEGIN BY CLEANING INSIDE THE PALACE
DECORATING THE FURNISHINGS,
MAKING A CATALOG OF IMPERIAL GIFTS,
THEN, MORE CLEANING.
Skwoosh

twitch
!
SCUTTLE
bow
ha ha ha
The Minister of the Interior and the Grand Chamberlain
ahahaha
ARE YOU STILL HIDING FROM A DEMON?
.....
I CANNOT APPEAR BEFORE THE NOBLES IN THE PALACE AND POLLUTE THEIR EYES.
MY FAMILY'S POSITION WASN'T THE SAME AS YOURS OR THE CHAMBERLAINS'
WE WERE ONLY COMMONERS.

.....
IS THAT SO...
I'M SORRY FOR LAUGHING ABOUT IT.

WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE, I ADMIRED THE GENERALS AND MINISTERS
SHUTTER
WHY ARE YOU WORKING ALONGSIDE AN OLD MAN LIKE ME?

SHUTTER

WHY DID YOU WANT TO CONTINUE WORKING AS A SERVANT IN THE PALACE?

HER MAJESTY MIGHT FIND IT DIVERTING WHILE TAKING A LEISURELY STROLL
ONCE IT WITHERS, IT WILL FINALLY FLOWER IN THAT POT
I WANT HER MAJESTY TO SEE IT
THAT'S
Oh, I'm sorry
RUSTLE
AHH, NO, NO! THIS SHOULD BE PUT IN THE SMALL POT.
I'M THE SAME
HUH?
What is he saying?
I AM HERE BECAUSE I WANT TO SEE HER SMILING FACE

Ah, there are flowers...
MAJESTY,
YOUR MAJESTY
YOUR MIND IS ELSEWHERE
I CAME TO THE PALACE TO TELL YOU THE STORIES OF MY TRAVELS STUDYING ABROAD
ROKUJOIIN-NO-MIYA

WHEN YOU FIRST BECAME EMPEROR, YOUR EYES WOULD LIGHT UP WHEN YOU HEARD MY STORIES OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD
THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO
I SAW THAT ATTENDANT MISONO A LITTLE WHILE AGO.
FOR SOME REASON HE WAS TRIMMING THE GARDEN WITH AN OLD SERVANT
IS HE NOW WORKING IN A LOW POSITION BECAUSE HE HEARD FROM THE GRAND CHAMBERLAIN THAT HE COULD NO LONGER BE BESIDE YOU?
HOW VERY DEVOTED.
HE WANTED TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUGGESTION, BUT THE GRAND CHAMBERLAIN COULD NOT FIND A CHANCE TO MEET YOU
Because I didn't want to meet him.
Smile
Smile
.....
glare
WHY DON'T WE
CALL HIM IN HERE NOW?
IN HERE?

I WOULD LIKE TO MEET HIM AS WELL.
grin
HER MAJ-ESTY?
I-I'LL COME RIGHT AWAY!!
RUNNING
I'LL BE REINSTATED AS AN ATTENDANT.
NO, I'LL
thump
thump
GET TO SEE HER MAJESTY AFTER SUCH A LONG TIME!!

BUT MY CHILDISH THOUGHTS WERE CRUSHED.
I HAVE ARRIVED
WHY IS THE BLIND LOWERED?
HE IS NO LONGER AN ATTENDANT BOY.
SHOULD AN ORDINARY SERVANT SEE YOUR ROYAL FACE?
ISN'T THAT A RULE IN THE PALACE?
EVEN I WASN'T ALLOWED TO ENDER THE CEDAR DOORS

WELL, MISONO,
I HEARD YOU WERE SICK IN BED BEFORE. YOU'RE ALREADY BETTER NOW.
WHEN I LAST MET MIYA-SAMA, I WAS VERY RUDE.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. YOU WERE WORKING AS AN ATTENDANT BOY.
smile
NOW, YOU SHOULD TRY TO GAIN DISCRETION AS AN ADULT.
YES.
"AN ADULT..."

THE BLIND WILL NOT BE RAISED.
BE-CAUSE I'M AN ADULT,
TO THINK I COULD SEE HER MAJESTY'S FACE...
Gulp
HOW CONCEITED.
I WAS ALLOWED TO BE BESIDE HER BECAUSE I WAS A CHILD.
AS MIYA-SAMA SAID,
NOW I'M

MISONO,
FAR FROM HER.
I ENJOYED HAVING YOU BESIDE ME
IF YOU HAD CONTINUED SERVING ME FOR A LONG TIME IN THE PALACE AS I HAD WISHED,
YOU WOULD HAVE BECOME A BIRD IN A CAGE.
HER FACE...
AND THAT IS NOT SOMETHING I WANTED

THANK YOU FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE UNTIL NOW.
I WANT TO SEE
HER FACE!
I'M FOND OF YOU.

YOUR MAJESTY! I
A DIRECT ANSWER IS RUDE, MISONO!!
JOLT
BE WELL.

YES...
whoosh
KASHI-WAGI,
I'VE COME BACK TO HELP YOU!
clatter
clatter
.....
HAS YOUR MEETING WITH HER MAJESTY ALREADY FINISHED?
...YES, SIR.
clatter

EVEN RECENTLY, SHE THOUGHT I HAD BEEN DOING WELL WITH MY WORK.
SHE STILL REMEMBERED ME!
clatter...
SHE HONORED ME WITH WORDS OF GRATITUDE...
whoosh
DECEMBER'S WIND BEGAN TO BLOW
EVERYONE IN THE PALACE WAS BUSY WITH PREPARATIONS FOR THE UPCOMING NEW YEAR
MY REGRETFUL HEART WAS SMOTHERED BY THE HECTIC PREPARATIONS, AND I WORKED SILENTLY
ha

STEP
STEP
TOKUTAIJI, WHO WILL BE THE ONE WHO WILL HOLD MY SKIRT TRAIN AT TOMORROW'S NEW YEAR CELEBRATION?
YES, MA'AM.
I WANT TO KNOW RIGHT NOW
Go, Go...
Whoosh
I'LL ASK THE GRAND CHAMBER-LAIN!!
.....
KASHIWAGI,

YOU'RE THERE, AREN'T YOU, KASHIWAGI
.....
SINCE YOU'RE THERE, LISTEN
YOU'VE BEEN A LOYAL SERVANT SINCE MY FATHER'S REIGN
WHEN I WAS YOUNG, I THOUGHT YOU WERE A HIDDEN MONSTER I BOTHERED YOU BY PULLING DOWN THE SCREEN
I've found you!!
chuckle.
THE MEIDI EMPEROR WAS PLEASED WITH YOU
SINCE THEN, YOU'VE ALWAYS OFFERED YOURSELF TO THIS PALACE. I WANT TO LISTEN TO YOU.
ARE YOU REALLY HAPPY?

I'VE WORKED TO PROVIDE FOR MY FAMILY, YET YOU CALL ME A SELFLESSLY LOYAL PERSON
YOU OVER-ESTIMATE ME.
IF YOU WILL ALLOW THIS OLD MAN TO SAY ONE THING DIRECTLY TO YOU
.....
I MERELY ADMIRED MEIDI-SAMA
THIS HOLLYHOCK WAS ARRANGED BY KASHIWAGI.

I LIKE THE COLOR.
I ONLY MISS HIS MAJESTY.
IS THAT SO?
I'M RELIEVED
THANK YOU FOR THIS YEAR AS WELL

FROM NOW ON, THAT WILL BE MY ROLE
THE NEW YEAR
YOU WOULD THINK THE NEW YEAR IN THE PALACE WOULD BE A REFINED THING
Hahaha
Happy New Year
IS THE CARRIAGE PORCH CONGESTED? GUIDE THE CARRIAGES! THERE'S STILL TIME UNTIL THE GUEST OF HONOR ARRIVES.
WAAH!
HER MAJESTY'S COURT DRESS DECORATIONS ARE IN THE WRONG PLACES! FIX IT QUICKLY BEFORE THE CEREMONY BEGINS.
KYA!
AAH!
THEY WILL ALSO BE AT THE CEREMONY THE SKIRT TRAIN CARRIERS MAKE PREPARATIONS AS WELL...
YA-Y!
YA-Y!
Be quiet!
Noble middle school students

WE ARE ON STANDBY UNTIL THE CELEBRATION ENDS
HAPPY NEW YEAR, KASHIWAGI-SAN
Silence...
WAAH
WAAH
Eu
DID THOSE WORDS MEAN ANYTHING?
"I'M FOND OF YOU"
.....
WILL I REALLY LEAVE THE PALACE IN THREE DAYS?..
rustle
Ah!
What?
drop
Um
rolls rolls
Huh?

What, you're going in there?
RON!?
woof
CHOMP
Good boy, good, good
!!
BAM
SLIDE
WAIT!
PATTER PATTER
COME BACK!!!

THE CEDAR DOOR WITH BIRDS
THE INNER PALACE IS BEHIND THEM
hah
hah
NOW I CAN'T GO IN
IRRITATED
kyuun
SLAM
COME BACK! RON!

YOUR MAJESTY...!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN HERE?
HURRY, COME IN AND CLOSE THE DOOR.
clatter
I came in
.....

I'VE WANTED TO TALK TO YOU SINCE YOU CAME BACK
THERE HAS BEEN NOTHING STOPPING YOU FROM ENTERING
Hey, open your mouth, Ron.
Yelp
MISONO,
WHAT WAS YOUR REPLY THEN?
I SAID THAT I AM FOND OF YOU, SO WHAT IS YOUR REPLY?

I
I ALSO
ADMIRE YOU GREATLY.
blush
I ALREADY KNEW THAT
WHAT?
WHY IS HE BLUSHING IN FRONT OF ME?

ST-STILL!
?
YOUR MAJESTY SAID I WOULD BE A CAGED BIRD.
I DON'T PLAN ON BECOMING A CAGED BIRD!
BEING BY YOUR MAJ-ESTY'S SIDE
IS ENJOY-ABLE EVEN IF IT'S ONLY FOR A LITTLE WHILE
I ALREADY DECIDED TO BECOME A CAGE!

he
HE
HE HE HE...
?!
what?
Ha Ha Ha a
?
Ha Ha Ha Ha
YOU REALLY
DIDN'T THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU WERE SAYING
woof woof
A CAGE? IS THAT SO?
Ha Ha

IF YOU'RE GOING TO SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT, COME IN
BECOME AN INTERESTING CAGE FOREVER.
YES, MA'AM!

MISONO,
YOU TAKE IT.
flutter
PATTER..
WAAH WAAH
WOOF
I'LL GET THE TRAIN CARRIER FOR YOU
HOW DID I FORGET THAT IT WAS TIME FOR THE CEREMONY?
IT'S FINE

AND THE STUDENT TRAIN CARRIERS ARE CUTE
THE MIYA FAMILY PRINCESSES' COURT DRESSES ARE A GRAND SIGHT!
MIYA-SAMA, YOU JEST.
YES, ACTUALLY, I WANTED TO BE THE TRAIN CARRIER.
H-h-ha
THIS YEAR, HER MAJESTY'S TRAIN CARRIER IS ROKUJOIIN-NO-MIYA-SAMA'S NEPHEW.
!!
HER MAJ-ESTY?
STILL...
chatter
chatter
?
SLAM

YOUR ATTENTION, EVERYONE.
flutter
!
HAPPY
smile
NEW YEAR.

WHOOSH
WH-WHAT? WHY IS MISONO HOLDING HER TRAIN!?
NO, I DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH...
PLEASE EXPLAIN THIS,
HEAD PALACE LADY!!

"DID I SAY THAT YOU FAVORED HIM?"
.....
WOULD IT BE BETTER IF SHE FAVORED THE CORRUPT GENERALS AND POLITICIANS?
WHAT?
LOOK, MIYA-SAMA IS ALSO SMILING FOR THAT..
SMILE

THAT PERSON'S SMILE IS A FRIGHTENING THING...
?
shiver
shiver
MISONO,
I MIGHT SELFISHLY SAY I AM IN A CAGE
BUT I WOULD BE ABLE TO FLAP MY WINGS IN A SPACIOUS CAGE.
IF I WISH TO GO OUTSIDE OF THE PALACE, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

WOULD MY ATTENDANT BE IN THE CAGE WITH ME?
EVERY YEAR, I WAS GIVEN THE HONOR OF CARRYING HER TRAIN.
Woof
Woof
IN THE MIDDLE OF HER MAJESTY'S REIGN,
LIKE THIS

SHE CONFIDED IN ME THE SECRETS OF THE INNER-MOST INNER PALACE OF HER MAJESTY'S HEART.
scratch scratch
NO, I SHOULD SAY
NO MORE THAN THIS.
IN ADDITION, HER MAJ-ESTY ALSO GAVE ME SOMETHING ELSE.
hirota hirota
I WON'T TELL ANYONE ABOUT IT.

AFTERWORD

THANK YOU FOR READING "PALACE MEIDI."

It's been a while since I've written a shoujo manga.

Cough Cough

Editor's note: Banko uses this character in her gag and autobiographical manga.

THIS PALACE WAS DESTROYED BY FIRE DURING THE WAR.

THE PHOTOGRAPHS I SAW FROM THIS TIME WERE A MIX FROM BOTH JAPAN AND OVERSEAS. THE PALACE WAS MAGNIFICENT.

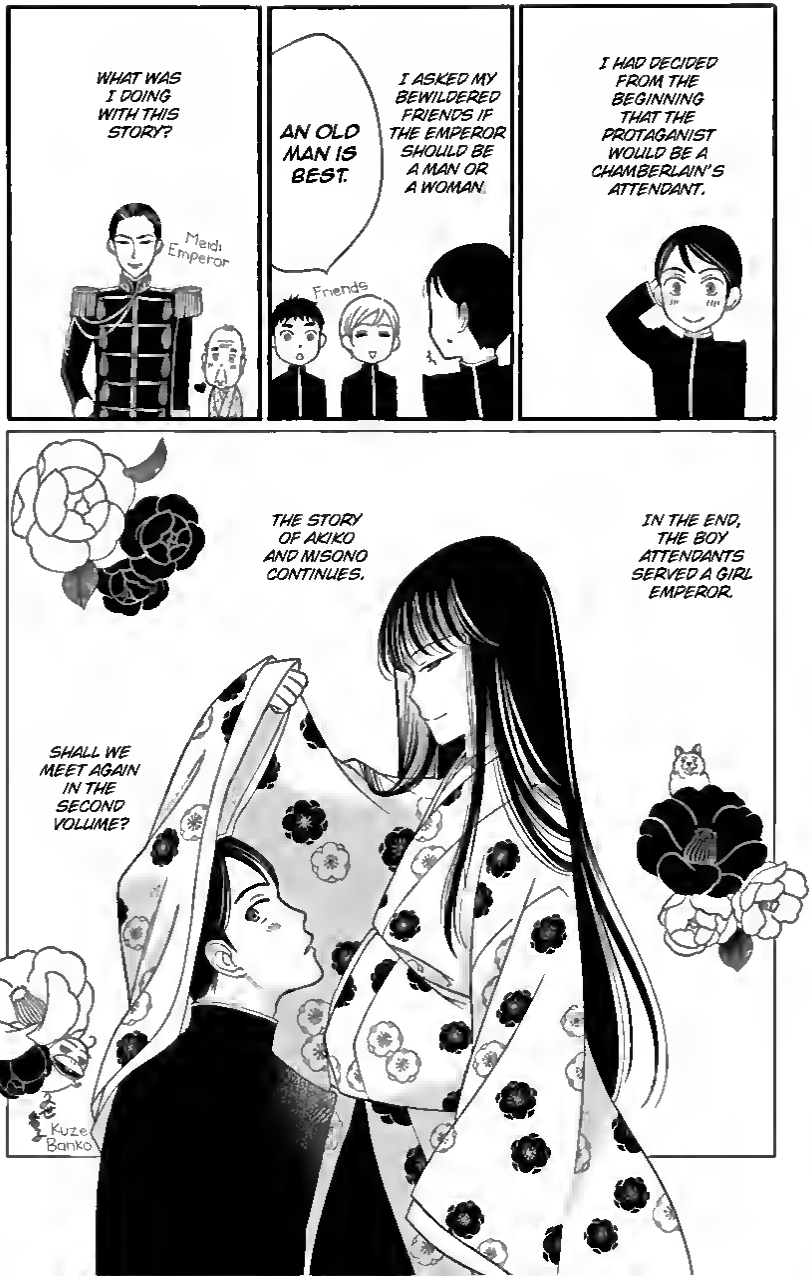
The clothes in the palace were kimono, dresses, frock coats and military uniforms.

"PALACE" IS THE STORY OF A FANCIFUL TIME AND A FANCIFUL COUNTRY.

Ouch

Ouch

THE MODEL WAS THE MEIJI ERA, AND THE BUILDING IS BASED ON THE "MEIJI PALACE."


WHAT WAS I DOING WITH THIS STORY?
Meiji Emperor
AN OLD MAN IS BEST.
I ASKED MY BEWILDERED FRIENDS IF THE EMPEROR SHOULD BE A MAN OR A WOMAN.
Friends
I HAD DECIDED FROM THE BEGINNING THAT THE PROTAGANIST WOULD BE A CHAMBERLAIN'S ATTENDANT.
THE STORY OF AKIKO AND MISONO CONTINUES.
IN THE END, THE BOY ATTENDANTS SERVED A GIRL EMPEROR.
SHALL WE MEET AGAIN IN THE SECOND VOLUME?
Kuze Banko